

LIVING ORTHODOXY



ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT
PROTECTOR OF THE PIUKHTITSKAYA CONVENT

In this issue...

The Piukhtitskaya Icon of the Mother of God:

Account and Akathist Hymn

St. Onouphrios the Egyptian

Finding Genuine Catholicism

in the Orthodox East (conclusion)

Homily on Pentecost (Fr. David Moser)

St. Andrew the Hermit

The Narrative of Metrius

#153 - Vol. XXVI #3

May-June 2006

SINGLE COPY: \$4.00



LIVING ORTHODOXY

is published with the blessing of
HIS GRACE, GABRIEL, Bishop of Manhattan
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

FROM THE KONTAKION OF
ST. ROMANUS THE MELODIST, ON PENTECOST

When the Holy Ghost descended, He confined
the tongues, [which] separated the nations.
Inasmuch as He distributed the tongues of fire,
He summoned all to unity.
And we praise in unison
The All-Holy Spirit.

O Jesus, grant to Thy servants speedy and
constant consolation
In time of neglect of our spirits.
Do not separate Thyself from our spirits in time
of afflictions;

Do not be far from our minds in the
midst of outward pomp,
but always show Thyself to us.

O Thou Who art everywhere, draw near to us,
draw near.

Just as Thou art everywhere with Thine
apostles.

Just take thought for us who love Thee
So that we who are brought together may
hymn and praise Thee,
The All-holy Spirit.

O Savior, Thou wast not separated from Thy
disciples when Thou didst journey to
Heaven.

Because, O infinite One, no place is apart from Thee;
And even if there be such a place, it is
destroyed, and disappears as Sodom did.
For Thou hast established the universe, fulfilling
all things.

The apostles possessed Thee in their
hearts;

Hence, when Thou didst formerly ascend from
the Mount of Olives,
They returned home rejoicing, playing
and singing praise
To the All-holy Spirit.

(continued on page 16)

LIVING ORTHODOXY (ISSN #0279-8433) is published at a
base subscription rate of \$20/yr. (see special rates below) by the
St. John of Kronstadt Press at Agape Community. Periodical
postage paid at Liberty, TN 37095. **POSTMASTER:** Send form
3579 to LIVING ORTHODOXY, Liberty TN 37095.

Editor: Fr. Gregory (Williams).

SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 2 yrs./\$38; 3 yrs./\$55.
Lifetime \$800. Invoiced institutional subscriptions \$22/yr. (US).
Gift subscriptions may be entered by subscribers @ \$19/yr.
Group orders of 6 or more individually addressed copies @ \$18/
yr. each. Parish packets of 6 or more copies to one address @ \$17/
yr. each. Bulk orders of 20+ copies/issue, \$2.50/copy, invoiced
for each issue. **FOREIGN SUBSCRIBERS:** surface delivery —
Canada, add \$3/yr; elsewhere add \$4/yr. Air subscriptions can be
accepted for one year only: Canada \$28/yr; elsewhere \$40/yr.
ALL REMITTANCES W/ ORDERS, IN U.S. FUNDS.

Subscribers are asked to supply address changes promptly in order to
assure delivery and reduce costs. Replacements for copies destroyed by
the Post Office as a result of failure to provide notification of change of
address will be charged @ \$4.50/copy + s&h.

Vol. XXVI, No. 3; May-June 2006; #153

CONTENTS

The Piukhtitskaya Icon of the Mother of God	3
Akathist Hymn for the Piukhtitskaya Icon	4
St. Onouphrios the Egyptian	10
Finding Genuine Catholicism in the Orthodox East (conclusion)	17
Homily on Pentecost (Fr. David Moser)	24
St. Andrw the Hermit	26
The Narrative of Metrius	27

Want to know more about the Haitian
Orthodox Mission? Please visit the website:
www.orthodoxhaiti.org

Looking for good Orthodox books? Please visit
the St. John of Kronstadt Press website:
www.sjkgp.org

THE PIUKHTITSKAYA ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD COMMEMORATED ON THE 28TH DAY OF JUNE

More than four hundred years ago, on Mount Zhuravlina, which is in Estonia, a radiant Woman appeared to certain shepherds. They hastened to the mountain, but She vanished, only to appear again soon after. The shepherds summoned the local villagers, wishing that they too behold the wondrous Lady who stood in the splendor of never-waning light. And the all-holy Theotokos counted them worthy also to behold her appearance. Approaching the place where the grace-bearing Woman was standing, the villagers discovered in the lightning-scarred trunk of an ancient oak-tree an icon of the Dormition. The Mother of God also sanctified by her coming a spring at the foot of Mount Zhuravlina, which has been glorified by many miracles and healings.

The inhabitants of that region began from that time to call this mountain Piukhtitskaya, which in the Estonian language means "holy place"; and by the ancient oak-tree (in the opinion of tree specialists it is at least a thousand years old), which is still standing, the Orthodox built a chapel, in which they enshrined the miraculous icon. From every direction people came to venerate the image, which had been given by the Queen of heaven herself, and to wash in the vivifying waters of the spring. Every year, on the feast of the Mother of God, so great a number of pilgrims assembled in Piukhtitsa that during the vigil service the whole mountain was illumined by the flames of the candles they held in their hands. All through the night, by the chapel and the sanctified oak-tree, prayerful hymnody resounded, and the reading of akathist hymns.

And a miracle was wrought! The Orthodox, who lived in utter poverty, persecuted and oppressed, found there a refuge, spiritual consolation, and hope of salvation; for on that holy mountain the Mother of God deigned to permit the founding of a convent dedicated to the Dormition. Gathering together faithful maidens dedicated to Christ and the Orthodox Church there in Piukhtitsa, the all-holy Theotokos provided the nascent convent with a great shepherd, an earthly angel and

heavenly man, the great intercessor for all of Russia: the righteous John of Kronstadt. A zealous warrior of Christ, Father John became a true father for the sisters of the convent, assisting, instructing and nurturing them spiritually.

Unsparring of himself, generously responding to the countless requests of those who appealed to him for prayerful aid (in Kronstadt they even opened a special post office for the mail received and sent by Father John Sergiev!), building churches and monasteries, putting the poverty-stricken and suffering on their feet again in the House of Industry he had opened in Kronstadt, and in the midst of this all unfailingly serving the Divine Liturgy, and taking no time to sleep, the great righteous man always remembered the faraway Mount Piukhtitskaya in Estonia. There they waited for him and believed: Our father will not forget us; he will pray for us and help us. Father John loved the sisters of Piukhtitsa greatly, and sent many of his spiritual children to the convent, saying: "Go to Piukhtitsa. There the kingdom of heaven is only three steps away!"

With the name of the righteous John of Kronstadt the history of another venerated icon of the convent is also connected: the image of the Mother of God "by the Spring". In 1894, the sisters of the convent presented their greatly beloved pastor, on the occasion of his nameday, with an icon of the all-holy Mother of God appearing by the spring at the foot of the holy mountain. The saint prayed before this icon and bequeathed it to a pious couple who lived in St. Petersburg. Not long before their own death, this elderly couple gave this icon to the Nun Virsavia, who had been a member of St. John's convent in St. Petersburg, which had been suppressed by that time. She never parted with the icon and kept it safe; but the all-holy Theotokos, appearing to this nun in a dream, revealed that it was her will that the icon be returned to the Piukhtitsa Convent, saying: "I will come to thee myself." This happened on Pascha of 1946. Mother Virsavia died, but the image of the Mother of God "by the

Spring” returned to the convent on the day when the Bogoliubskaya Icon is commemorated (18 June/1 July). Failing in health, the aged Abbess Alexia II (Golubeva), who took the name Sergia when she received the tonsure to the Great Schema, had repeatedly begged to be released from the responsibilities of being abbess. She and her nuns went out to the oak-tree and there greeted the icon which had belonged to St. John of Kronstadt. Thus the Queen of heaven invisibly took up the abbess’s staff in her own convent.

Even in the 19th century, a wondrous monastic cathedral appeared to the great shepherd of Russia in a vision. One day, returning from the holy spring with Barbara, the first abbess of Piukhtitsa, he pointed with his hand to the peak of the mountain, saying: “Mother Abbess, look what a magnificent cathedral you have standing on the mountain!” The abbess answered: “Yes, a cathedral would be a good thing, father, but we can’t even speak of such a thing at this time.” The convent was sunk in great poverty. No one at that time even contemplated the construction of a cathedral. But St. John, paying no heed to the abbess’s words, repeated a second and a third time: “Mother Barbara, what a magnificent cathedral you having standing on the mountain! The Antichrist will not be able to approach it!”

And so, after the passage of so many years, the icon before which he had prayed and from which he would not part until his death, arrived at the Cathedral of the Dormition, which had been raised on the mountain after the great righteous man had reposed in the Lord. It would have been unbelievable for his icon, which is of no small dimensions and bears the inscription “To Archpriest Father John Il’ich Sergiev, the work of the painters of Holy Dormition Convent on the Holy Mountain of the Province of Estonia. 19 October 1894”, to have survived intact in St. Petersburg in those years, when they persecuted people for merely mentioning the name of St. John of Kronstadt. Thanks be to God that in His mercy He preserved this holy object—the cherished icon of our beloved pastor, the righteous Father John of Kronstadt! Now, the incomparable, radiant image of the all-pure Virgin Theotokos, illumining the Piukhtitskaya Convent with its rays, uplifting the souls of the Orthodox, reveals to all that the abbess on this holy mountain is the Queen of Heaven herself, who once appeared there, and has not left the little flock of Christ bereft of her intercession, covering with her boundless lovingkindness all who with faith have recourse to her almighty help and her intercession before her Son and our God Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory, honor and worship, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

AKATHIST HYMN TO THE ALL-HOLY THEOTOKOS READ BEFORE HER ICON “AT THE WELL-SPRING”, KNOWN AS THE PIUKHTITSKAYA ICON WHICH THE HOLY CHURCH COMMEMORATES ON THE 28TH OF JUNE

KONTAKION I

With love and thanksgiving let us praise the Mother of God and Queen of heaven, who was chosen from among all generations and unceasingly prayeth for us before the throne of her son. Desiring to see the glorification of the mighty works of God throughout all the ends of the earth, O all-blessed one, thou wast well-pleased to raise up thy houses of salvation. Wherefore, looking with pity upon the sufferings of the Orthodox in the Baltic lands, thou hast visited those parts with the grace, that, comforted by thee, we may cry out to thee thus:

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

IKOS I

The angels in heaven and the Estonian shepherds were sore amazed when they beheld the Mother of God standing on a mountain and stretching forth her hands, pointing to this holy place, which would providentially be glorified. Wherefore, we also, filled with joy by thy great mercy toward us, cry out to thee:

Rejoice, thou who didst draw Mount Athos as thy portion;
rejoice, thou who didst identify thine icon by many miracles!

Rejoice, thou who didst glorify the Lavra of the Kiev Caves with the miraculous icon of thy dormition;

rejoice, thou who by the sign of the divine footprint hast sanctified the Lavra of Pochaev!

Rejoice, thou who hast made the Mountain of the Theotokos in Piukhtitsy, the Sion of the Baltic lands;

rejoice, thou who didst found there the Monastery of the Dormition, and gavest to it the great pastor, the holy and righteous John of Kronstadt!

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION II

Seeing the firm confession of Faith of the Orthodox and their sacrificial opposition to the Lutheran heresy, even to the shedding of their blood, the ungodly Teutonic Knights cruelly oppressed Orthodoxy in the Estonian land, burning and destroying their churches; yet in vain did they forbid the faithful to glorify Christ our God in Orthodox manner, and to chant unto Him: Alleluia!

IKOS II

Perceiving the providence of God in thy wondrous appearance on the mountain to the Estonian shepherd, the people called Mount Piukhtitsa "holy", and together hymned thy lovingkindness, chanting:

Rejoice, thou who didst look upon the oppression of thy faithful servants with the eye of thy mercy;

rejoice, thou who didst swiftly avenge their afflictions!

Rejoice, all-holy Mother of God, who gatherest all under thy godly protection;

rejoice, thou who leavest no-one bereft of thy holy aid!

Rejoice, thou who for many years didst remain the joy and consolation of the Piukhtitskaya region and its surrounding villages;

rejoice, thou who givest hope of salvation to all!
Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION III

Seeing the all-wondrous Lady shining with light, the Estonian shepherd hastened toward her; but perceiving the divine origin of the vision through its disappearance, he cried out with fear: Alleluia!

IKOS III

Hastening to show the wondrous vision to his friends and kin, the shepherd summoned them, that with him they also might gaze upon the all-wondrous Lady standing on the summit of the mountain. But when they beheld her disappearance at their approach and her radiant appearance after their withdrawal, with the fear of God they chanted thus:

Rejoice, thou who dost oppose the proud;

rejoice, thou who givest grace to the humble!

Rejoice, thou who dost prefer childlike faith to reason falsely so called;

rejoice, thou who revealest thyself in thy visions and wonders only to the pure of soul!

Rejoice, O faith, hope, love and wisdom of Christians;

rejoice, protection unhidden from the pursuit of those who seek after thee!

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION IV

Having within a storm of doubting thoughts, the inhabitants of that village hastened to the summit of the mountain; and when they arrived at the place called Lazoreva, where the wondrous Lady stood, in the cleft of an oak-tree they found an icon of the dormition of the Mother of God, and called that place the Mountain of the Theotokos. Then the Orthodox people raised up a chapel to hold her holy icon at the oak glorified by its manifestation, and have honored it with processions, at the same time glorifying her, the all-pure one, and chanting to God: Alleluia!

IKOS IV

Having heard of the miracle of the appearance of the Mother of God on the Mountain of the Theotokos in Estonia, people came from all the ends of the Russian land, and rejoiced at the sight of this new manifestation of thy lovingkindness, O Mother of God. Wherefore, in thanksgiving we cry out to thee thus:

Rejoice, O all-wondrous Lady, who didst appear for the salvation of the Orthodox of Estonia;

rejoice, thou who didst send down thy mercy upon thy people!

Rejoice, thou who hast given thy holy icon to the faithful for veneration;

rejoice, thou who hast glorified it with the sign of many miracles!

Rejoice, thou who hast made the oak-tree, which was sanctified by thine appearance, the place of pious contemplation;

rejoice, thou who hast perceptibly revealed the chapel which preserved thy holy icon to be a haven where secret and contrite prayers are heard!

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION V

Desiring that the Orthodox people of the Estonian land be granted an abundance of visible grace imparted through the healing water of the holy spring which sprung forth in the sight of the shepherds on the mountain, thou didst point to this fountain with outstretched hands. Wherefore, thankful that such mercy hath been shown us by thee, we chant unto God: Alleluia!

IKOS V

All have been filled with joy by the glorious well-spring given to the people on Mount Piukhtitsa, who wash themselves in the basin thereof, which imparteth grace and healing in abundance. Wherefore, unto thee, our joy, who givest us wings to fly out of the abyss of sin, do we cry out in gratitude:

Rejoice, thou who dost mercifully accept souls who cry out to God;

rejoice, thou who dost invisibly assist the humble!

Rejoice, thou who from the holy spring pourest forth the healing of wounds, not only of body, but of soul as well;

rejoice, thou who impartest thy grace to the holy water, which is borne all throughout the land of Russia by pilgrims!

Rejoice, thou who dost strengthen the faith of pure hearts at thy fountain;

rejoice, thou who from the ends of the earth dost invisibly gather in thy convent souls which thirst for the living God of might!

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION VI

Seeing thy wonder-working icon, that divinely guided star, venerated by the Orthodox, the Teutonic Knights desired to implant there the Lutheran heresy and to destroy that holy place; but the Orthodox people cried out to thee, O loving Mother, and besought thee to take that holy mountain under thy protection, chanting unto God: Alleluia!

IKOS VI

Seeing Orthodoxy trampled underfoot in Estonia, and the people oppressed by the Teutons, the great Peter, Tsar of Russia, advanced upon the Baltic region with his armies and subdued it. Then was the people's entreaty for aid to Orthodoxy in that land heard. Wherefore, the faithful cried out to thee thus:

Rejoice, invincible champion of Orthodoxy; rejoice, invisible strengthener of the confessors of the Faith!

Rejoice, thou who hast multiplied exceedingly the number of Orthodox churches, reduced by persecutions;

rejoice, thou who by an increase of miracles hast greatly diminished the number of those who doubt Orthodoxy!

Rejoice, for thy newly-manifested icon was adorned with a covering of gold by the zeal of pilgrims;

rejoice, for over the ancient chapel a new church hath been raised!

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION VII

Desiring the salvation of faithful daughters under thy protection, O Theotokos, the holy and righteous John of Kronstadt founded a convent there, and foretold that it would stand forever, divinely adorned. Wherefore, with thanksgiving we chant unto God: Alleluia!

IKOS VII

The convent grew by labors and prayer on the Mountain of the Theotokos, and won the love of people far beyond the boundaries of Estonia. And thus in this community is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Mount Sion, which saith: "In the last time will appear a mountain of the Lord, and the house of God upon the summit of the mountain; and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all people shall come unto it; and many nations shall come, and say: 'Come, let us ascend the mountain of the Lord, unto the house of the God of Jacob; and He shall declare to us His way, and we shall follow it.'" Wherefore, with joy we cry unto thee:

Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, who by the providence of God hast founded the Convent of Piukhtitsa;

rejoice, thou who thereby hast brought the prophecy of Isaiah to fulfillment!

Rejoice, thou who in our day hast shown exalted Christian asceticism to the people in the lives of the blessed eldresses;

rejoice, thou who hast called all to follow their example!

Rejoice, thou who clearly showest the power of the clairvoyant blessing of the ever-memorable Father John in the abundance of the mercies of God poured forth upon the convent;

rejoice, thou who dost compassionately impart the grace of the Spirit unto those

who with faith fall down before thy wonder-working image!

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION VIII

Grateful to their beloved pastor, the sisters of Piukhtitsa made a splendid image of thine appearance, O all-pure one, and gave it to their spiritual father. And this icon flourished in beauty like a palm-tree, and remained with the righteous one until his death. To the end of his days, O heavenly Mistress, he offered up fervent prayers for the Convent of the Dormition; and we also never cease to glorify thy Son, Who hath granted this joy unto us, O loving one, and with compunction we cry: Alleluia!

IKOS VIII

Burning with the flame of love for thee, the all-pure Mother of God, the pastor of Kronstadt was vouchsafed to behold thee, the Queen of Heaven, descending with thine icon and saying to him in a voice most sweet: "Ye are most kind, O children of the heavenly Father!" The intercessor for the Russian land gazed upon thine all-pure countenance, O Theotokos, and beheld thine eyes, so kindly, humble, innocent and blue, and in his soul he cried out with compunction:

Rejoice, O Mistress, all-radiant star, who abidest wholly in the splendor of God Who is Light;

rejoice, eternal holiness, who hast received divine purity from heaven!

Rejoice, all-divinely adorned temple of God, chosen bride of the Holy Spirit;

rejoice, Mother of Life, our calm haven amid both tribulations and joys!

Rejoice, helper most good, who humblest the hearts of men;

rejoice, ally driving away the aerial spirits of wickedness!

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION IX

A wondrous miracle took place when thine icon, which had been given to the holy and righteous one, O Mistress, was returned to the convent by God's providence and illumined the Cathedral of the Dormition with rays of never-waning light. Thus, O immaculate Ever-virgin, did thy Piukhtitsa Icon shine forth in the cathedral church once revealed to the pastor of Kronstadt in a vision. Wherefore, marveling at this thy forethought for this image, which manifestly showeth forth thy good pleasure toward it, we cry out to God with compunction: Alleluia!

IKOS IX

The orator of wisdom falsely so called is at a loss how to glorify the countless miracles revealed to the Orthodox people in Thy holy icons; for the pure of heart and simple of soul behold therein that which the prideful of mind, seeing, fail to see, and hearing, fail to hear. But glorifying thy divine goodwill toward the meek and lowly, we cry to thee:

Rejoice, thou who on the day of Holy Pascha didst gladden the inhabitants of the Convent of Piukhtitsa with tidings of the new discovery of thine icon;

rejoice, thou who through thine intercession sendest down thy mercies upon its nuns!

Rejoice, thou who fulfillst the secret desires of those who in prayer seek spiritual communion with thee;

rejoice, thou who dost wondrously direct their steps to thy convent!

Rejoice, thou who guidest the hidden pious thoughts of those who honor thee;

rejoice, thou who dost secretly bring to pass the intentions of those who would serve thee in thy convent without departing!

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION X

Desiring to save those who loved the purity of body, and yet more that of the soul, the Mother of God formed communities of monastics, which like the stars of the sky shine forth in this adulterous and sinful world; and she chose for herself from among

the unbounded field of this earthly vale of tears and sorrows zealous handmaids, like the lilies of the field adorned with virginal purity, and tended them in her holy communities. Wherefore, bless her, the unfading Blossom of purity, and chant with fear unto God: Alleluia!

IKOS X

Thou art a bulwark for the choirs of virgins and the assemblies of monks, O Virgin Theotokos; wherefore, thou knewest whom to choose to be with those who stand undivided in the glorification of thy name, and moreover, whom to honor with the abbatial staff. Marveling at thy foreknowledge concerning thine elect, which on the day of the arrival of the newly discovered icon in the Convent of Piukhtitsa informed the Abbess Alexia that her many years of petitions that she be released from the task of abbess because of infirmity were answered, we cry out to thee:

Rejoice, thou who in the form of the Piukhtitsa Icon didst arrive on the holy mountain on the day when thy Bogoliubskaya Icon was celebrated;

rejoice, thou who didst thereby dry the tears of the elderly abbess!

Rejoice, thou who in those days didst not appoint any earthly woman to be abbess in the Convent of Piukhtitsa;

rejoice, thou who didst invisibly take up the abbatial staff thyself!

Rejoice, our consolation and hope of salvation;

rejoice, our ineffable joy!

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION XI

The choir of monastics continually offereth thee hymns of laudation, praising the new and wondrous appearance of thine icon to the widow of a priest, the nun Evfrosynia, who in a vision during sleep beheld thine image, of which she had no prior knowledge. And when she heard a divine voice saying: "I shall help thee find this icon; seek it on the mountain", she searched long for it and found it in the Convent of Piukhtitsa; and joyfully recognizing

thy radiant face, which she had beheld in the dream, she cried out to God in thanksgiving: Alleluia!

IKOS XI

We see the holy Virgin, who standeth over the Mount of the Theotokos reaching down her hands, as a light-giving lamp appearing to those in the darkness of sin and the vale of tears; for she desireth to lead all who labor and are heavy laden up out of the gloom of this life of apostasy from God into the light of divine knowledge. And trusting in her omnipotent intercession at the throne of her Son, Christ our God, and on her impartial care for all Christian souls who hasten to the Lord, we cry out to her thus:

Rejoice, thou who lookest upon those who seek salvation and solitary dwelling with the Lord; rejoice, thou who dost generously assuage the spiritual starvation of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness!

Rejoice, sole consolation of parents troubled by children who have fallen away from the Lord; rejoice, invincible fortress of children persecuted by parents who have forgotten God!

Rejoice, Christian hope for those who weep for the departed;

rejoice, certain assurance for those who look for life everlasting with Christ!

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION XII

The grace of God is present in the all-glorious miracles which spring from thy holy icons, and which have been manifested throughout the whole land of Russia, O all-pure and all-blessed Virgin Theotokos. And seeing this grace, which openly worketh in thine images, which have been miraculously given to the Convent of Piukhtitsa, and seeing in this thy special providence for the Sion of the Baltic lands, with thanksgiving we hymn our omniscient God: Alleluia!

IKOS XII

Hymning all the wondrous miracles which pour forth from thy holy icons, O Mother of Christ our God, we petition and beseech thee: Deprive us not

of thy boundless mercy because of our apostasy, blasphemy, renunciation of the Orthodox Faith and other sins, which we have committed, offending the name of God; but vouchsafe that to the end of our lives we may repent of what we have done and glorify thee, who contained the Infinite One, and may chant unto thee thus:

Rejoice, flower of virginity, who invisibly holdest the abbatial staff in thy holy convents;

rejoice, O Theotokos our Directress, hope of Christians!

Rejoice, O good one, who art quick to hear, fulfilling all our goodly petitions;

rejoice, O our joy, who turnest our sorrows and grief into joy!

Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, who illuminest all with the rays of thy great mercy;

rejoice, O joyous one, who even in thy repose hast not abandoned us!

Rejoice, O thou who art rich in love, and dost mercifully dry the tears of our hearts!

KONTAKION XIII

O most hymned Mother, abundantly loving helper of thine Orthodox people, who suffer in this mad world! Look upon our sufferings and needs, and hearken to our entreaties, which are offered up to thee in humility from the depths of our exhausted hearts. Wash away our sins, and vouchsafe that, to the end of our days, we may without pretense cry out to our Savior, Who was incarnate of thee: Alleluia!

This Kontakion is recited thrice, whereupon Ikos I and Kontakion I are repeated.

PRAYER TO THE ALL-HOLY THEOTOKOS BEFORE HER PIUKHTITSA ICON "AT THE WELL"

O all-holy and all-blessed Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ most sweet! We fall down and offer homage to thee before thy radiant image, and humbly pray: O most merciful one, forgive all our errors and all the offenses which we have abundantly committed against thy Son and our Savior, in knowledge and in ignorance, by not doing His holy commandments, by neglect of His holy things, by carelessness

in prayer and refusal to bear our cross. Look upon our thirst for salvation and our onerous labors, and with thy Son's flock which, though greatly sinful remaineth faithful to Him, do thou remain according to His true words, recorded in the Holy Gospel: "Fear not, little flock, for your Father hath been pleased to give you the kingdom." O life-creating well-spring of our consolation, unto thee do we offer this humble entreaty, and we beseech thy maternal care for us before the throne of our heavenly Father. Deprive us not of this grace-filled kingdom because of our sins, for we know that naught that is outward and self-loving, prideful and vainglorious, no acquisition of worldly fame, no virtuous deeds performed with secret love of self, no rank or position, nor even the monastic calling, is able to gain us admittance to the kingdom

of heaven, but only a pure heart and a contrite and humble spirit, which are given by the Holy Spirit after much labor in prayer. Help us during the remaining days of our lives to worship thy Son, O loving Theotokos, and, having acquired unfeigned love for God and neighbor, to fulfill this first commandment of the Lord, which alone leadeth to the kingdom of heaven. Overlooking our unworthiness, vouchsafe that we may become children of God through grace and may inherit life everlasting with all who have pleased God in repentance. O Mother of God, by the wounds of Jesus thy Son most serene, lead us into His heavenly bridal-chamber, that we may eternally glorify and hymn the most worshipful and majestic name of the most Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Translated from the Church Slavonic by the reader Isaac E. Lambertsen, from
The Akathist Hymn to the Piukhtitsa Icon of the Mother of God "At the Well"
(Estonia: Piukhtitsa Convent, 1991).

OUR VENERABLE FATHER ONOUPHRIOS THE EGYPTIAN WHOM THE CHURCH CELEBRATES JUNE 12

Onouphrios the righteous ascetic was in his prime during the fourth century A.D. In the beginning he was a member of a monastery situated in Hermopolis, a suburb of Thebes. When he was told of the serene life that the prophet Elias led, as well as Saint John the Baptist, he abandoned the monastery and lived in the desert for a total of sixty years away from the presence of men. He was found by the monk Paphnoutius who wrote down his life. Paphnoutius lived quietly in Egypt when suddenly he was enlightened by God and decided to survey the inner desert. There in the wilderness he saw with his own eyes all those things that he wrote about the righteous one saying the following:

One day, I sat in my cell and God motivated me to go into the inner desert and find righteous men and receive their blessing. So I left the monastery taking with me a few loaves of bread and some water. I began my journey with great anticipation and walked for a few days. Finally I stumbled on a

cave, which appeared to be sealed. I knocked at the door saying the words: "Father bless." I heard no reply so I opened the door and entered. I found a man there who stood in a praying position and when I touched him he fell to the earth. He was covered with palm leaves which crumbled as ashes in my hands from the passage of time. I was alarmed due to this and turned to prayer. I recited such psalms as the amomos among others, and during the night I prayed for his soul and buried him as best I could. At dawn I sealed the entrance and departed, walking for four more days until I had no more bread. Thus I languished from hunger and collapsed to the earth as one dead.

At that moment I saw before me a magnificent angel in the form of a man whose appearance was divine and striking and I was truly appalled. He approached me with a radiant face and touched my hands, my feet and mouth. Suddenly I was filled with strength miraculously and with that divine

buoyancy I walked four more days without eating. And I saw that angel a second time and he reinforced me in the way I explained earlier and I walked again for four days. The third time I trudged for ten days without any nourishment whatsoever. At the end I was exhausted from the long journey and I arrived at a spot that God had chosen. So I sat down on a rock to rest. Suddenly, in the distance I saw a man coming whose appearance was foreboding, for he was a fearful sight to behold. He was naked and hairy, as he was covered by the hairs on his back as a wild animal. Around his waist he was girded with leaves of a tree. I was so filled with fright that I climbed on a high rock and tried to hide. Meanwhile he came near and fell at the bottom of the rock for he was dazed by the rays of the sun. He rested a bit and then spoke to me saying: "Come down oh ye servant of God Paphnoutius and fear not. For I too am a sinful man working God for the salvation of my soul in this arid desert.

When I heard this, I was glad and I climbed down and fell at his feet asking forgiveness and a blessing besides. He, meanwhile, raised me up from the earth and we greeted one another according to monastic custom and sat down. He was considerably weakened due to old age and abstinence, and the hairs of his body were white as snow. I had a desire to learn more about him and his name so I said to him: "I beg of you oh holy father; tell me where you are from, your name and when you came to this desert inasmuch as God has revealed me to you." He answered: "My name is Onouphrios. I have lived in this habitat for seventy years having the beasts as my companions and living on herbs and drinking water. I never saw another human being except you whom God has sent to bury me tomorrow. My father was the king of Persia. But my mother was barren so they entreated God to give them an heir. And after many entreaties God hearkened to them. When my mother conceived there was great rejoicing in the palace. After my birth, my father saw a divine vision which instructed him to name me Onouphrios at Baptism. Later he was to lead me to a monastery which is in the Thebaid of Egypt and which they call hysechasterion. And thus did my father do. We

proceeded with our servants toward Egypt and we were accompanied by a fawn that nursed me during the length of that journey to the awe and astonishment of everyone.

When we arrived at that monastery, my father told the abbot everything; he in return said: "No woman has ever set foot in this place. And how is it possible for the child to be weaned?" He replied: "Just as God made it possible for the fawn to follow us all the way, thus she will come here again by divine notion to nurse him every day until he is weaned." Thus the abbot gave his approval and I stayed in that monastery. My father meanwhile returned to his abode while the fawn came every day until the third year and it nursed me. The monks of that monastery were most holy men, as they led irreproachable lives and walked in the ways of God. They had one soul and one spirit and there was love and harmony among them. What was acceptable to one was acceptable to all. They fasted, prayed during the night, and at day time they worked with such silence on their handicraft that no one dared speak a word without reason. I learned from them the sacred Scriptures, and all the rules of the monastic life with precision. They had many words of praise for the Prophet Elias and especially how he was preserved by God in the desert with patience and abstinence, and received the grace from above to perform miracles. For he never tasted the bitter cup of death but went to paradise in body and soul. In the New Testament, they praised the honored John the Baptist to the utmost who suffered more than all the other saints.

As I overheard the Fathers praising the saints by the day, I asked them: "Do the anchorites have more authority before God?" They said to me: "Yes our son, they are greater than us. For we have one another and see each other by the day, we do the services together with spiritual joy. When we become hungry, the table is set for us. If one of us turns ill, whether it be physically or spiritually, the others assist him and cater to him with concern. And if we need anything else, we find the analogous cure. The blessed hesychasts, however, have no one to succor them. They base their hopes in God with all their spirit. If they are tempted by the demon, there is no one there to counsel them. If they

become hungry or thirsty or naked, they have none of the needs of life. They attend the services with greater zeal and fervor than we do and have no handicraft. And the angels of God minister to them by the day and when their soul leaves the body, they take it with the greatest respect and bring it before the Holy Trinity as they chant with triumph and jubilation.

As I heard these words from the holy Fathers, I was overwhelmed by the thought of becoming an anchorite and each day that desire increased in me as I pondered on the possibility of reaching a state of silence. One night, therefore, I took a few loaves of bread and went out of the monastery as I entreated God to lead me to a site which was pleasing to Him and that I may dwell in. When I arrived in the desert, I thought it might be good to live on a remote mountain. Suddenly, I saw before me a great light. This startled me so that I thought of returning to the monastery. But out of that light appeared a glorious man who said to me: "Fear not Onouphrios! I am the Angel of God Who ordered me to guard you from the day of your birth until the very last day. Continue on your journey and do not be intimidated by the temptations of the demons or any other obstacle and I will be with you to guard you till the day when I will surrender your soul into the hands of God.

After the Angel spoke these things, he accompanied me for another seventy miles until we came to a cave, and he became invisible. I knocked on the door of that cave and I saw an inveterate man come out of the cave who was graceful in appearance and most virtuous. I revered him at once and he greeted me saying: "Welcome my son and fellow struggler Onouphrios! May the Lord protect and keep you in the fear of Him." We entered the cave and I stayed with him a few days, receiving advice and instruction on various matters. He taught me many things which are necessary for asceticism and then said to me: "Arise my son so that I may show you a cavern in the inner desert where it is the will of God for you to dwell so that you will fight against the demons with fearlessness and attain the trophies of victory." We walked for a total of four days and four nights. We reached a small hut which was near a palm tree and a small spring, and he said to me:

"This is the place that God has prepared for you as a dwelling." He stayed with me for another thirty days teaching me the intricate rules of the monastic arena, and he departed to his own cave. He came every year to visit me until he passed away, here, and I buried him. His name was Ermeias from the house of Isachar, as he said.

"My response to these things was," states Paphnoutios: "As I, Paphnoutios, heard these words, I said to him: I realize oh holy father that you suffered greatly in this desert. He replied: believe me, brother, I went through so much travail that I lost all hope because of the heat of the summer and the cold of winter, hunger and the other necessities of the body. My garments withered away because of the cold, and I remained naked for which reason I fell sick and endured a maelstrom of temptations which are impossible to describe by word of mouth. I withstood all this with fortitude as I anticipated the unknown rewards that God has prepared for those Who love Him. The Lord observed my difficulties and He ordered that hairs grow all over my body and I no longer sensed the cold or any other symptom. Meanwhile, an angel of the Lord brought me a loaf of bread every day to keep me alive and so that I would serve God with greater alacrity.*

When I heard these things from the righteous one, I marveled and said to him: "How do you partake of the divine sacraments?" He answered: "Every Sunday an angel comes and administers communion to all us hermits, and on that day when we are about to receive, we are filled with great spiritual uplifting. We sense neither hunger or thirst, or pain nor any other grief, and when one of us wishes to see a man, or someone, he is taken by the angels to paradise. And there he witnesses the brightness and beauty of the heavenly kingdom and is filled with ecstasy as he partakes of the divine light. He rejoices in the spirit. He is filled with exuberance for the rewards that he has attained; he forgets all his previous labors and the hardships that he bore. A desire is ignited within as he looks to the future and that desire is the love of God. Thus, he struggles with greater resolve with all his power in regards to

*Spiritual readiness.

spiritual endeavors, in order to inherit the ultimate rewards." As the ever-memorable Onouphrios described all these things, I felt such a rejuvenation that I forgot the long journey, the hunger and thirst, and all the weariness I considered as minuscule. I received strength in body and soul, and said to him in elation: "Blessed am I who was deemed worthy to see you and to hear your wonderful words." He answered: "Let us cease our words my son, and let us go that you may see my dwelling."

We walked about three miles and came to a small hut which was near a spring and also by a palm tree. We sat down and began to talk about divine things. The day was nearing its end. And as the sun set, I saw in the center of the cell a loaf of bread which was large and fragrant. The saint said to me: "Arise my son. Let us eat and drink whatever the Lord has sent us, for you are weary from your journey and if you do not eat you are at risk." I said: "The Lord our Savior liveth, before Whom we stand. I shall not eat if it is not with brotherly love. I bade him for a long time and finally, with difficulty I convinced him. He blessed the table and cut the bread and we both ate to the glory of God. I was fulfilled and there was bread left over. After we gave thanks, we passed the night in all night prayer."

At dawn, I noticed the saint's countenance and it was downcast and grim. I was alarmed and asked him the reason for this. And he said: "Fear not my brother. For the good and merciful God has sent you to bury my body. Behold, today my sojourn ends and my soul shall depart to the unknown domain of the heavenly blessedness. You must remember when you go to Egypt to proclaim to the monks and to all the Christians that I asked this favor from God: that whosoever keeps my memorial, or records, or narrates my life as I have described it to you may not incur any temptation from the devil." I said to him: "I have a deep desire to live in this oasis oh father, so give me your blessing that I may spend the last part of my life here." He said to me: "God did not send you to live here, but only to bury my body and to rejoice with the righteous servants who inhabit the desert, and to reveal to the pious and devout Christians their way of life to the glory of God and that they might imitate them as much as possible."

When I heard these words, I bowed before him saying: "I know most holy Father that whatsoever you ask of God He shall give you because of your many struggles. I beg of you therefore to give me your blessing so that I may become like you in virtue and receive the same glory from God as you, in the everlasting life, just as I was fortunate to know you in this life." He replied: "May the Lord not disappoint you in that which you have requested. But may He bless and keep you in His providence and preserve you from every sin and temptation of the adversary so that you may complete that which you desire. May the angels cover you and guard you from the assaults of the enemy, so that he may not find any blame in you on the day of judgment. And may the blessing of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit be with you in this age and in the age to come."

At the conclusion of these words he knelt down, raised his hands to heaven and said in tears: "Oh most holy God in the highest Whose might is intractable and Whose glory inconceivable and Whose mercy infinite, I honor and worship Thee, I glorify and praise Thee. I have yearned for Thee from my youth and have followed Thee. Harken unto me for I have cried unto Thee. Thou hast known my humility, Thou hast delivered my soul in time of need. Into the hands of mine enemies Thou didst not surrender me but hast set my feet on solid ground. I beseech Thee oh my Lord, cover me with Thy right hand so that my soul is not hindered by the demons as it is separated from the body but receive it with Thy holy Angels and deposit it in Thy realm which is the light of Thy countenance. For Thou art blessed unto all ages. Remember oh merciful God Thy faithful people. And whosoever is imperiled at sea or at the mercy of a judge, or in any other jeopardy and calls upon Thee saying: "God almighty, by the intercessions of Thy servant Onouphrios, have mercy upon me, I pray Thee before Thy kingdom as Thou hast vowed, harken unto their entreaty."

At the completion of these words he said: "Lord, in Thy hands I surrender my soul. And thus he collapsed to the earth and prayed mystically in that state. His face shone as the light and I sensed a rare and divine essence which set me in awe. It appeared to me as a breath of paradise. Then I

heard violent thunder and lightning. I fell to the earth out of fear and when I looked upwards, I saw the heavens open and a vast array of angels who chanted harmonious hymns to the saint in a celestial tone, and in their hands they carried candles and golden censers as deacons. A great light shone in their midst and out of the light a divine voice was heard that said: "Come forth my beloved Onouphrios that I may guide thee to the rest of the righteous ones and to the unspeakable experience to which thou hast aspired."

That blessed soul came out of the body then in the form of an all-white dove and our Lord Jesus Christ took it in his holy hands and ascended to heaven while the holy angels chanted with delight and exaltation. I then stood upright and embraced the most sacred relic as it shone as a precious pearl and emitted an aromatic essence. I mourned for a long time because I was deprived of such an untold treasure so soon, which I attained with much difficulty. I pondered with what means I was to dig in the earth and hide him when I did not possess a metal implement. Suddenly, two lions appeared and they approached with humility as they stroked his feet and made gestures of mourning and grief as if they were logical creatures. I said to them: "I know that God has sent you that we may bury the holy relic. For even the wild beasts honor the Creator and are obedient to Him. I took my staff and marked the dimensions of the grave. They, in the meantime, dug into the soil with their claws and made a grave. I tore my rasson in twain which I had taken from the aforementioned hermit and wrapped the holy relic with it in reverence and buried it. The lions bowed down before the tomb of the saint and before me the meager one, and departed.

I stayed there alone in tears, meditating upon my unworthiness and upon my sins and I said the following: "Woe unto me the indolent and reckless one. Countless is the number of servants that my Lord has and they are all brazen soldiers. But as for me, I am listless and reluctant. What answer will I give my maker? What reward and laurel of victory shall I receive when I never contested against the demons?" As I weighed these thoughts, I reckoned I would stay on that spot and carry on for the rest

of my life. But immediately there was an earthquake, and the mountain collapsed and it covered the cave, the spring, and the palm tree, and all was buried in the rubble. When I saw all this, I knew that it was not the will of God for me to stay there, so I wept. Suddenly, the Angel who appeared earlier, appeared again and said to me: "Weep not, but rejoice for you have seen many wonders. Go to Egypt and tell everyone about the blessed Onouphrios and what you have witnessed and what you shall see in this desert. Go therefore in peace and God will strengthen you." The blessed Onouphrios reposed on the 12th of June to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After this I walked for four days and I chanced upon a cell. I entered inside and found no one. So I sat down waiting for the occupant. He came a while later and he was venerable and admirable in appearance. He was white haired and he wore a garment which was woven from palm leaves. His countenance was that of a divine Angel and he said to me: "Peace be unto you my brother and collaborer Paphnoutios who buried the blessed Onouphrios." As I heard these words, I was appalled and fell to the earth and worshipped him. He said: "Rise up my son; the Lord hath made you worthy to know his friends. He has revealed your approach to us. We have lived for sixty years in this desert and have seen no other human being."

As we spoke thus, three other elderly men arrived similar to him in dress and character, and after I greeted them, we sat down and spoke about the blessed Onouphrios and other saints. Then they said to me: "Rise oh son that we may break bread. Your heart must be strengthened for you have walked a long distance and we have gathered in your honor so that we may rejoice in body and soul." We all stood and prayed and behold I saw five loaves of warm bread as if they had come out of the oven at that very moment. They also brought additional food and we all ate to our contentment. After the benediction, they told me: "Behold! As you heard, we have been in this desert sixty years, and each day four loaves of bread are brought to us by divine notion. Today, thanks to you five have been provided. And we know not how they appeared. When we

read the vespers service, we find them on the table.”

Following this, we conducted a vigil praying all night. And when the dawn arrived, I begged of them to reveal their names, but they would not do so. They responded instead: “He who knows everything, knows our names too. Only you must forgive us and intercede that we shall see one another in Paradise.” I received their blessing and departed. Then I walked for one day and came to a recess which was most suitable and picturesque. There was a cave there and a spring, and it watered many trees that were laden with fruit to the extent that I marveled at their abundance and variety. There were numerous trees and their fruit tasted almost like honey. They emitted such an aroma, that I thought I was in Paradise. As I was stunned by their beauty, I saw four young men who were dressed in sheep skins and whose appearance was most impressive. They approached me and said: “Welcome oh brother Paphnoutius.” I fell to the ground and worshipped them. They raised me up and we sat down and conversed. Their appearance was so awe-inspiring that I thought they were angels of Paradise. They took some of the fruits and offered them to me as they showed me kindness and understanding. I stayed there for seven days, and inquired about their origin and how they found that setting. They answered me: “Because the Lord has sent you we shall tell you the truth.”

“We came from a city called Oxyrinchos. Our parents are prominent citizens of that town. They are officials in city government and they trained us accurately in letters. After we received an education, they wished to train us in philosophy. We gave this matter some thought and decided to acquire God’s wisdom. Thus we departed secretly from our country and came to the desert. We only brought a few loaves of bread with us and a little water that lasted us one week. Then we passed many days in hunger and want not knowing what to do, and we saw before us a man of distinction who brought us to this very place. He entrusted us to a holy elder who lived for one year teaching us how to work in God. When one year elapsed, the elder reposed and as of now we have been here for six years and have never eaten bread or any other

food except for the fruits of these trees. Five days of the week we live separately in silence, and on the Sabbath we meet here and pass the two days as we live as brothers. Then again we return to silence and the one does not know the monastic attributes of the other. I said to them: “How do you partake of the divine sacraments?” They answered: “For this we gather here and tomorrow you shall receive Communion too. So be ready. The Angel of the Lord descends tomorrow and he shall give us the Body and Blood of Christ with his own hand.” At this revelation, I was awe-struck. And we remained chanting all that night praising the Lord Jesus.

At dawn the Angel of the Lord appeared and we all sensed a mystical essence which gave us a unique uplifting. I was absolutely spell-bound as if I were in Paradise. I sensed fortitude at the sight of the Angel, and I rose up and we received Communion from his hands as he blessed us saying: “May this Body and Blood of Christ Jesus our God become a true nourishment and life everlasting.” And we responded in fear saying: “Amen.” It was a Sunday that day and our hearts were exhilarated as the angel said to me: “Go to Egypt, oh Paphnoutius, and declare to everyone those things that thou hast seen in this desert, and especially about Onouphrios whom the Lord has deemed thee worthy to enjoy, and has counted thee among His saints.” I asked permission of the angel to allow me to dwell with those holy men to the end of my life and he said to me: “As it pleaseth the Lord, it is necessary that His will be done. And whatever deed one accomplishes who lives accordingly shall receive a fitting reward. Go back to thy cell therefore because God wishes that thou do so. And thou shalt receive the same reward on the day of dispensation as will they. For thy name is written in the book of the saints as I have told thee.” When the angel finished this, he vanished. The brothers set the table and we ate fruits to the glory of God. I, in the meantime, sensed that untold fragrance to the end of the day.

The following night we did a vigil. And in the morning I bid them farewell and begged them to tell me their names. They said that their names — beginning with the first — were: John, the second, Andrew, Heraclaemon, and Theophilos. They all accompanied me for five miles and then we

embraced one another, and they returned to their cells. I drifted away as I was both sad and buoyant. I was grieved because I was not deemed worthy to live in such a beautiful oasis. I was inspired also because I bore in mind the blessings I received from the righteous servants of God and from the angel himself. After three days' journey I arrived in Egypt where I met many brethren who fear God and rested with them for ten days. I narrated all those things that were said earlier. As they listened they wept for joy and thanked the Lord. These brethren were attentive and hospitable for they wrote down everything I told them and they circulated it to all the Sketis and read it to the Fathers who praised God.

This is the end of the narrative of the blessed Paphnoutius who, after his arrival at the cell, lived for a short time. Then he saw an angel who said to him: "Come forth oh man of God to the permanent tents where you shall rejoice with the holy ones, who have propitiated God by living in mountains and deserts."

At these words, the righteous one thanked God. He lived only for a short spell, and then departed to the desired One, to that unspeakable joy and unknown realm. May we see that state by the intercessions of Saints Onouphrios and Paphnoutius and the other saints. May we rejoice with them in the age to come honoring the Father and Son and Holy Spirit the true and only God. Amen.

ENDNOTE:

*A Greek version of his life survives at the Monastery of Iveron and in others; the beginning of which is: "A memorial to the righteous and an excellent narrative about them." Another life of this saint may be read at Vatopaedion, Iveron, and Saint Panteleimon authored by Nicholas Monk, the Sinaite, whose beginning reads: "The reward of virtue is the motivation of those who pursue it." The style is an excellent

Hellenistic type. The life that appears in the *Synaxaristes* was translated by Nicodemus the Athonite and it was taken from the *Eklogion*. A panegyric service was written by Gerasimus Micrayiannites to Saints Onouphrios and Peter the Athonite which was published by Sotyrrios Schoenas at Volos. The Life of St. Onouphrios as it appears in the writings of St. Dimitry of Rostov was published in Vol. XIX #3.

Translated by Leo Papadopoulos, from the *Great Synaxaristes*. Matthew Lagges, publisher. Athens, 1960. Vol. VI, pp. 110-21. All rights reserved 2004.

(continued from page 2)

Thw eleven disciples returned with joy from the Mount of Olives.

Luke, who recorded sacred things,
Writes that they returned to Jerusalem,
Mounted to the upper room, sat
down, and remained there —
Peter and the rest of the disciples.

Cephas who was their chief spoke to them:
"Lovers of the kingdom, let us lift up our hearts

To the One who made us a promise in these words: 'I shall send you,
The All-holy Spirit.'"

Peter, speaking like this to the apostles, roused them to prayer,

And standing in their midst, he spoke as follows:

"On bended knee let us beg and pray
That we shall make this chamber a church,
for so it is and has become.

Let us be eager to cry unto God,
'Send us Thy good spirit
So that it may lead us all to correct knowledge
Which Thou hast prepared for those who
worship and praise
The All-holy Spirit."

(...)

Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist, trans. Marjorie Carpenter, vol. I, pp. 361-2, University of Missouri Press, 1970. Out of print, but a few copies seem to be available in the used book market (a little less than \$200/set).

FINDING GENUINE CATHOLICISM IN THE ORTHODOX EAST

BY KEVIN KIRWAN

(CONCLUSION)

HONORIUS CONDEMNED BY NAME AT SIXTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

In the year 681 A.D., the Sixth Ecumenical Council convened in Constantinople. It was at this council the true faith of Christ's Holy Catholic Church was once again verified and the promoters and teachers of heresy anathematized. It was here that an Ecumenical Council in which the pope at that time concurred, and which the Roman Catholic Church has always accepted, that Honorius former Pope of Rome was condemned as one who had both held and taught heresy.

Charles Joseph Hefele, a noted Roman Catholic historian and author of an authoritative history of the ancient Ecumenical Councils, pulls no punches in his assessing the clear record of those proceedings.

"It is in the highest degree startling, even scarcely credible, that an Ecumenical Council should punish with anathema a pope as a heretic! ...That, however the sixth Ecumenical Council actually condemned Honorius on account of heresy, is clear beyond all doubt, when we consider the following collection of the sentences of the Synod against him: At the entrance of the thirteenth session, on March 28, 681, the Synod says: "After reading the doctrinal letter of Sergius of Constantinople to Cyrus of Phasis (afterwards of Alexandria) and to Pope Honorius, and also the letter of the latter Sergius, we find that these documents were quite foreign to the apostolic doctrines, and to the declarations of the holy Councils and all the Fathers of note, and follow the false doctrines of heretics. Therefore, we reject them completely, and abhor them as hurtful to the soul. But also the names of these men must be thrust out of the Church, namely that of Sergius, the first who wrote this impious doctrine. Further that of Cyrus of Alexandria, of Pyrrus, Paul, and Peter of Constantinople, and Theodore of Pharan, all of whom also Pope Agatho rejected in his letter to the Emperor. We punish them all with anathema. But

along with them, it is our universal decision that there shall also be shut out from the Church and anathematized the former Pope Honorius of old Rome, because we found in his letter to Sergius, that in everything he followed his view and confirmed his impious doctrine."

"Towards the end of the same session, the second letter of Pope Honorius to Sergius was presented for examination, and it was ordered that all the documents brought by George, the keeper of the archives in Constantinople, and among them the two letters of Honorius, should immediately be burnt as hurtful to the soul."

"Again, the sixth Ecumenical Council referred to Honorius in the sixteenth session, on August 9, 681, at the acclamations and exclamations with which the transactions of this day were closed. The Bishops exclaimed: Anathema to the heretic Sergius, to the heretic Cyrus, to the heretic Honorius, to the heretic Pyrrus."

"Still more important is that which took place at the eighteenth and last session, on September 16, 681. In the decree of faith which was now published, and forms the principal document of the Synod, we read: "The creeds (of the earlier ecumenical Synods) would have sufficed for knowledge and confirmation of the orthodox faith. Because, however, the originator of all evil still always finds a helping serpent, by which he may diffuse his poison, and therewith finds fit tools for his will, we mean Theodore of Pharan, Sergius, Pyrrus, Paul, Peter, former Bishops of Constantinople, also Honorius Pope of old Rome, Cyrus of Alexandria, so he failed not, by them, to cause trouble in the church by the scattering of the heretical doctrine of one will and one energy of the two natures of the one Christ."

"After the papal legates, all the bishops and the Emperor had received and subscribed this decree of faith, the Synod published the usual *logos prophaneticos* which, addressed to the Emperor, says among other things: "Therefore, we punish with exclusion and anathema, Theodore of Pharan,

Sergius, Paul, Pyrrhus, and Peter; also Cyrus and with them Honorius, formerly Bishop of Rome as he followed them” [23].

In addition, the acts of this Council were confirmed by imperial decree, which reiterates the anathemas and states, as did the assembled fathers of this Ecumenical Council, that Honorius, Pope of Rome, when it came to the heresy of Monothelites, agreed with it fully and strengthened it with his own teaching.

Pope Honorius was not, as some papal apologists would insist, some poor misunderstood man not really and truly holding and teaching these errors. Of course, that has to be their position now because Vatican I triumphed over the historical facts and voided them with its invented dogma that a pope cannot err on matters of faith or morals when exercising his office. In their thinking, no matter what history may show us or what the facts may be, this dogma cannot be disputed. One must reject the record—or at least distort it beyond recognition—to accommodate papal infallibility. History has to be ignored or completely reinvented in order to facilitate this new and baseless teaching.

I have been amazed by some of the explanations put forth by those defending papal infallibility, especially when confronted with Pope Honorius. It runs the gamut from being just a big misunderstanding to “he really didn’t understand what he was talking about, or didn’t mean what he actually said or wrote.” These excuses and protestations ring hollow and are meaningless in the light of actual events.

We have the continued and consistent testimony of Catholic Church history. In those centuries before the understanding of papal infallibility took root in the Latin Church, there was no need to ignore or distort the record. That is why you have successor popes for quite some time reaffirming matter-of-factly that Honorius was a heretic. They had nothing to protect because that which modern papal apologists attempt to protect was non-existent. Such an example is Pope Leo II who, writing back to the Emperor in May of 683, solemnly concurred in the acts of the Council and stated in his letter: “We anathematize the inventors of the

new error, to wit, Theodore of Pharan, Cyrus of Alexandria, Sergius, Pyrrhus Paul and Peter of Constantinople, and also Honorius who instead of purifying this Apostolic Church by the doctrine of the Apostles, has come near to overthrowing the faith by an impious treason” [24].

Then there is this most interesting bit of forgotten practice found in the *Liber Diurnus* — the Formulary of the Roman Chancery (from the fifth to the eleventh century). Here is found the old formula for the papal oath—according to which every new Pope, on entering upon his office, had to swear that “he recognized the Sixth Ecumenical Council, which smote with eternal anathema the originators of the heresy (Monothelitism), Sergius, Pyrrhus, etc. together with Honorius.” So we have literally dozens of popes in succession stating in their very oath of office that one of their predecessors, while occupying the See of Peter, did not in his discharging of that teaching ministry maintain the purity of Apostolic Faith and was guilty of departing from it. In other words an Ecumenical Council declares Honorius guilty of teaching heresy and a multitude of his own successors took an oath and swore to it.

There is no rational way, despite the protestations to the contrary, to skirt these facts or deny that this understanding, as defined in 1870, bore any resemblance to that which the ancient Catholic Church held forth at her Ecumenical Councils. Almost without exception, all historians of any repute, whether Roman Catholic or not, understand that Vatican I and its new dogmas find no basis in the genuine Holy Tradition of the Catholic Church.

A TRUE ECUMENICAL COUNCIL NULLIFIES VATICAN I

The seventh great and ancient Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church was held in the East at Nicea, 786/7. Its primary objective was to clarify the Church’s use of icons and their necessity in helping the Church preserve its doctrinal teaching. It served to establish once and for all that artistic depictions of Christ, the Theotokos and all

the saints was not only proper but necessary in Christ's holy Catholic Church. It condemned those who opposed their use as not fully embracing the mysteries of the Incarnation and, in effect, placing themselves outside the Catholic Tradition. Those who championed the Catholic understanding were known as "Iconophiles" and those who opposed the Catholic view, "Iconoclasts," which literally means "the destroyers of images."

In addition it laid out the Catholic criteria for determining the characteristics of a genuine Ecumenical Council. It is these pronouncements, which put Vatican I in such a dubious light.

These would include:

1. Universal participation of the five Patriarchs.
2. Postconciliar reception.
3. A vertical consensus with genuine apostolic tradition.

I. There was only one *patriarch* in attendance at Vatican I in the person of the Pope of Rome, Pius IX. The four Patriarchates were all in the Orthodox East and they were neither invited nor even if they had been, would be inclined to attend.

II. What of the post-conciliar reception? It was hardly swallowed in the West and of course an intolerable and onerous event for the entire Orthodox and Catholic East.

III. Finally it has nothing in common nor is it, in any way, shape, or form, tied to a consensus with genuine apostolic tradition. This very point was made over and over again by some of the Roman Catholic bishops and theologians in attendance at Vatican I. These minority participants made powerful and historically convincing arguments, but their voices were of course quelled shamelessly by Pius IX and his cohorts, who were intent on only consolidating the illicit power and authority of the Roman Catholic pontiff.

Luis M. Bermejo, S.J., in his insightful *Infallibility on Trial: Church Conciliarity and Communion*, says the following in regards to Vatican I being somehow approved by Vatican II and thus legitimized in Roman Catholic understanding:

"And so, taking now a general, overall view of

conciliar history, we come to the conclusion that whereas Vatican I is explicitly approved by Vatican II, it is indirectly—but authoritatively—demoted from the high level of ecumenicity by Nicea II: approved by a successor and demoted by a predecessor of greater authority than either of them. This is certainly a strange situation, but it should be faced squarely and taken into consideration when considering the question of the reception of Vatican I. To solve the problem of reception by selectively quoting Vatican II and ignoring completely—as is done—the damaging testimony of Nicea II is hardly proper. We have no right to loudly proclaim the ecumenicity and authority of Nicea II while at the same time ignoring the clear criterion of conciliar ecumenicity given by the same council. The conclusion, when applied to Vatican I, may be embarrassing, but it is unavoidable. Arbitrary selectivity is not the way to interpret history. If we quote Vatican II we should also, and with greater reason, quote Nicea II" [*Infallibility on Trial: Church Conciliarity and Communion*, Luis M. Bermejo, Westminster, Md., Christian Classics, 1992, pg. 204.].

"THOU ART PETER AND UPON THIS ROCK I WILL
BUILD MY CHURCH"

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:15-19)

This particular passage of scripture of course needs to be addressed whenever a discussion regarding Peter, his unique role in Christ's Catholic Church, and its meaning for the current occupant of the Roman episcopate is considered.

Does this passage confer upon Peter and his supposed successors a universal authority and jurisdiction in Christ's Holy Catholic Church? Does it also at the same time indicate an "infallible" teaching charism that is singularly and uniquely Rome's? If indeed it does, it would also be undeniably evident in the ancient patristic record. We should then have an almost unanimous voice in the ancient Church, as St. Vincent says in *The Commonitory*. If the Bishop of Rome is the central figure for Catholic unity and to be the unique and even in certain cases infallible spokesman for Christ in matters of the Faith, then why are there so many examples of popes who were neither?

If Christ is not appointing Peter the first pope, with all the prerogatives I have already shown to be wrongly usurped by Roman bishops who have gone beyond the boundaries of their limited authority, then what was He doing?

Let us examine the almost unanimous consensus of the ancient fathers (using St. Augustine as the prime example) who saw not a medieval papacy being established on a Roman bishop, but the Church of Christ upon the firm foundation of Peter's confession. The Church is founded on Christ. It is upon this foundation that the true meaning of this scripture comes to light.

Has hades or the devil ever overpowered, because of his own sin and willingness, a pope of Rome? Without question, many have gone off into diverse heresies, to say nothing of the many more who were absolute moral degenerates. The Borgia popes, for instance, would shame modern day rock stars by their conduct. Did not even Peter, who professed that saving confession that Jesus is the Christ, end up denying Him during His passion?

Mercifully, Christ restored Peter through Peter's repentance. The same probably cannot be said for many of those who were said to succeed him. We have considered more than a handful of cases in this treatment thus far who, though

bishops of Rome, showed themselves to be neither infallible regarding their teaching office, or recognized by their fellow bishops as having a universal authority and jurisdiction in Christ's Catholic Church.

So let's examine St. Augustine's understanding and read what he has to say regarding Matthew 16. Again compare his testimony to the novel understandings now attached to these passages and decide for yourself, who best reflects Catholic understanding: St. Augustine or Pius IX, who in the year 1870 attempted to establish as dogma that which a previous pope (John XXII) as late as the 14th century denounced as the worst kind of impiety?

Here is one of several places where St. Augustine comments on Matthew 16, and this is some 400 years removed from the time the Gospels were actually written. St. Augustine can hardly be described by any Roman Catholic as someone opposed to Catholic teaching. He is one of only a select few who is considered a Doctor of the Church. Study his own words.

But whom say ye that I am? Peter answered, 'Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.' One for many gave the answer, Unity in many. Then the Lord said to him, 'Blessed art thou Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' Then he added, 'and I say unto thee, "Thou art Peter."' For before he was called Simon. Now this name of Peter was given him by the Lord, and in a figure, that he should signify the Church. For seeing that Christ is the rock (petra), Peter is the Christian people. For the rock (petra) is the original name. Therefore Peter is so called from the rock; not the rock from Peter; as Christ is not called Christ from the Christian, but the Christian from Christ. Therefore he saith, 'Thou art Peter; and upon this Rock' which thou hast confessed, upon this rock which thou hast acknowledged, saying, 'Thou art the Christ the son of the living God,' will I build My Church; that is upon Myself, not Myself upon Thee.

For men who wished to be built upon men, said "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas, who is Peter." But others who did not wish to build upon Peter, but upon the Rock, said "But I am of Christ." And when the Apostle Paul ascertained that he was chosen, and Christ despised, he said, "is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" And, as not

in the name of Paul, so neither in the name of Peter; but in the name of Christ: that Peter might be built upon the Rock, not the Rock upon Peter [25].

These comments are consistent with practically every single Church Father preceding St. Augustine. Christ's Church is not built upon any other rock except Christ who is the chief cornerstone of the Church. Any attempt somehow to usurp or replace Christ as the foundation stone of the Church is to end up with a structure that must eventually collapse. All else but the person of Christ Himself is shifting and unstable. It is upon Him and Him alone that the Catholic Church of Christ is built. St. Augustine, arguably the most prominent early Latin Father, affirms this when he says, in yet another place: *"There's the rock for you, there's the foundation, there's where the Church has been built, which the gates of the underworld cannot conquer"* [26].

I can issue a challenge that no papal apologist (that is, one who defends the pope's universal authority, jurisdiction and infallibility) can answer. That challenge is to find a single Church Father of the first 600 years who in his complete body of writings shows himself to hold such notions as these. There will be isolated excerpts that, taken out of their context or not explained in other places in their writings, can, on the surface, seem to support the contention for universal jurisdiction which, of course, they do not, but nothing—and I do mean nothing—can even be remotely inferred to demonstrate papal infallibility.

Again and again we must always return to genuine Holy Tradition and see if that which we hold to be true is consistent with that testimony. Granted, this is no small task — but Catholic Christianity, to be genuinely held, demands and expects this effort.

IN CONCLUSION

What started off as an attempt to explain our conversion to Holy Orthodoxy has become something more of an apologetic work. I understand that much of what I wrote may be misconstrued by those who have adopted the medieval and non-

Catholic notion of a universally ruling infallible pope. Holding and adhering to such understanding isolates that person from the true Catholic consensus as expressed by the ancient fathers and early bishops of Rome. It is and always will be my intent to hold to that and only that which I am sure the Catholic Church of Christ has always held from ancient times, and my only opposition is directed at those things which depart from genuine Catholic Tradition. I hope the material presented here does, in fact, convince the reader to take a closer look at the patristic and historical record and is of use in determining whether or not their understandings now are, in fact, consistent with genuine Catholicism.

There is no general or "Universal Father" for the Catholic Church of Christ, or bishop of bishops. Such a concept is not only opposed by the Eastern Orthodox but, as so clearly shown by Pope Gregory the Great's own words, is nothing but an invention of the devil himself. While certain prestige or honor may be afforded to the more ancient Apostolic Sees (Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and of course Rome before she left communion with these other four), that in no way gives them the authority or license to usurp the individual prerogatives or dignities of other bishops. The only time when other bishops together may move against their brother bishop is if it is shown that he has departed from the Catholic Faith or fallen into immorality; then certain canonical proceedings may be imposed including removal from office.

You may say that Rome did, in fact, hold the "primacy" in the ancient Church. This is absolutely correct. In her early and illustrious history, she was a bulwark of Catholic Orthodoxy. Often, it would be various bishops and even patriarchs of Apostolic Sees in the East falling into heresy while Rome shone forth with the purity of Catholic Faith and doctrine. However, as I have just shown, she did not in every instance show herself indefectible because every bishop, no matter who he is, is still a man and capable of falling. Roman bishops did fall and, like their counterparts in the East, fell into diverse errors and, of course, blatant immorality

from time to time. As Pope Gregory has said, “If one assumes the mantle of universal and he falls, will not all fall with him?”

What is this “primacy” that Rome once had? It was a primacy of honor. That ancient See of Peter and Paul which saw them both martyred there and which was the seat of the Roman Empire did have a pre-eminence of honor, being the capital city until 324, when Constantine moved the capital, but it was never the See of the Catholic Church’s universal authority and no man ever occupied its episcopacy who could be guaranteed to speak infallibly on matters of faith and morals. These things are mere inventions of—if we believe Pope Gregory the Great—the devil and ambitious men intent on holding power and authority in such a way that Christ never gave, and which godly bishops would dare not assume for fear of following the first apostate in his arrogance.

Contrast the American constitutional “presidency” to its counterpart in Communist Cuba. You have two completely different entities, each giving its unique meaning to the same word. Our president holds a position of great prominence and is looked to as someone who leads the American people, but he is not someone who rules by the authority based in his own person and is a law unto himself. He is accountable to the Constitution and other branches of government with its checks, balances, and separation of powers and he has sworn to uphold it. He has boundaries that he cannot go beyond and if he were to do so, it would be an illegal usurpation of power. Likewise, bishops of Christ’s Holy Catholic Church are all bound by Holy Tradition and the consensus of understanding found in legitimate Holy Ecumenical Councils. Attempts by any one bishop to go beyond what is found in the true consensus of Catholic understanding, as shown by St. Vincent of Lerins and held by the Church for well over a millennium is nothing more than an assault on Catholic truth. Just as Castro brings different and ominous meanings to the word “president,” Roman Catholic papal apologists bring their own distorted understandings to the word “primacy” giving it the same despotic sense that a ruthless

communist like Castro gives to the title ‘el presidente’.

I have confronted what I believe are the two most crucial and fundamental differences between the Latin West and Orthodox East (Rome’s claim to universal jurisdiction, and the invented ability of the Roman Pontiff not to err in a matter of faith or morals when speaking from the papal Throne).

Everyone clamors for the reform of the papacy. Most of these voices, however, come from those not wanting a return to Holy Tradition but an acceleration of the “living Tradition” process. It is nothing more than a call for further erosion of the ancient guidelines.

The Catholic and Orthodox East, on the other hand, calls for genuine reform, a reform that must be preceded by repentance. There is no other alternative, given the facts of history and the consistent and lucid witness of Holy Tradition. Anything less than a repudiation of the old transgressions would solve nothing and could not lend itself to constructive or meaningful reconciliation.

I have had the opportunity to speak with many sincere Roman Catholics involved with ecumenical endeavors. They all sincerely desire full and real union with the Orthodox East. They also, for the most part, recognize the obstacle presented by Vatican I and its endorsement of the two great lies sanctioned there. Some of their own respected historians and theologians have not been reticent with their own concerns in this regard.

While readily admitting that these were unfortunate, wrong and baseless declarations, they do not believe that Vatican I will ever be rescinded, or officially declared null and void. They only hold forth the hope for some sort of barrier to be constructed around that conclave. The “fence” they hope to construct is redefinition. Using clever speech, they believe, will somehow make the plain statements of Vatican I of no effect. This of course, changes nothing and is, at its core, dishonest. It would be nothing more than a mere band-aid placed upon a cancer, a treatment without medicinal use or ability to provide remedy.

There remains only one course of action. Rome must return to the original Catholic consensus and

understanding, as expounded by St. Vincent who, speaking the true patristic mind of the ancients, said the following and it bears repeating. (Chapter XX 48) This being the case, he is a true and genuine Catholic, who loves the truth of God, who loves the Church, who loves the Body of Christ, who esteems divine religion and the Catholic Faith above everything, above the authority, above the regard, above the genius, above the eloquence, above the philosophy, of every man whatsoever; who sets light by all of these and, continuing steadfast and established in the faith, resolves that he will believe that, and only that which he is sure the Catholic Church has held universally and from ancient time.

In closing, I invite not only your sincere reflection on what I have said, but also invite you to come see for yourself. While my arguments may not adequately persuade, I do believe the experience of seeing, hearing, and even smelling the sweet incense of ancient Catholic worship can influence the heart, while words may sometimes only agitate it.

There is a powerful historical precedent for my saying this. It was this very exposure that led to the conversion of the Slavic people who make up modern day Russia and much of Eastern Europe. Prince Vladimir (956-1015), a man of intense spiritual yearnings, decided to send his personal

envoys to investigate the great religions of that era. On their way home from encountering Judaism and Islam in the Mideast and Christianity as practiced in Rome and Germany, they finally made their way to Constantinople. Here an epiphany occurred, as they observed the Divine Liturgy in the great Cathedral of Hagia Sophia.

When reporting their findings to St. Vladimir and recounting all they witnessed and spiritually experienced, they said the following to their prince about worship of the Holy Trinity in that magnificent cathedral, in the city founded by St. Constantine the Great:

“Upon entering this temple, we saw and heard wondrous things and could not tell if this might be heaven, or were we still upon the earth? We cannot describe the beauty we beheld, except of one thing we are sure, God dwells there among men.”

Prince Vladimir, won over by their findings was baptized in the Orthodox Catholic Faith along with his subjects. This now began the millennium-long and enduring linkage of Russia and the peoples of Eastern Europe with Holy Orthodoxy.

I now invite you, the reader, to follow the example of the ancient envoys of Prince Vladimir and see for yourself. It is the place where the search for genuine Catholicism ends.

ENDNOES

[22] *Heresies, Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*, Harold O.J. Brown pg. 190.

[23] *A History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. V, Charles Joseph Hefle pgs. 181-187.

[24] *The Papacy its Historic Origins and Relations with the Eastern Churches*, Abbé Guettée pgs. 248-250.

[25] Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. VI, St. Augustine, Sermons on New Testament Lessons, Sermon 26. 1-2 (Eerdmans, 1956) pg. 340.

[26] John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of St. Augustine* (New Rochelle: New City Press, 1993), Sermons, Vol. 6, Sermon 229P.1, pg. 327.

*It is expected that the entire work will be published in book form later this year
by The St. John of Kronstadt Press.*

A HOMILY ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

On this day, the feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is given to the Church. Just as our Lord Jesus Christ revealed Himself slowly to his apostles, showing Himself to them more and more as they became able to receive Him, so also the Holy Spirit, in descending upon the Church, was received by each one according to his ability. To the holy apostles there was given the vision of the tongues of flame and the gift of speaking with other tongues. This is because they were prepared for this great manifestation, prepared by their life with our Lord during His earthly ministry, prepared by His teaching and His pastoral care. They were prepared by His breathing upon them after His resurrection; they were prepared by the weeks that they spent in prayer after the Resurrection awaiting in obedience the coming of the Holy Spirit. Because of their preparation, they were able to manifest the life of the Trinity, given by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in such a miraculous manner. St Innocent, the first missionary bishop of Alaska, explains this to us (*Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven*, p 33):

“This is also the reason that the saints were able to manifest the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. They prepared themselves through prayer, fasting, works of mercy and righteousness and so were able to manifest clearly the life of the Trinity which is the Holy Spirit in the Church. And this same life is available to each one of us, for the Holy Spirit continues to dwell fully and completely in the Church and we are initiated into this life at our chrismation when we are sealed by the anointing with Holy Chrism with the gift of the Holy Spirit. In as much as we participate in the life of the Church, we participate in the life of the Trinity which is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

“But we do not all work miracles as the saints did, we do not all speak with tongues, we do not all see visions, we are not all clairvoyant. In fact very few of us ever get a glimpse of this life – why is that? If the Holy Spirit is in the Church, and we are in the Church along with the saints, how is it that each of us does not manifest such divine and supernatural

characteristics? The answer is simple, we each participate in the life of the Trinity and receive the gifts of grace according to our ability to receive them. If we do not manifest the divine life as the saints do, it is only because they have prepared more than we. St Seraphim spoke of this when he answered the question, ‘What is the purpose of the Christian life?’ He said that the purpose of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.”

How do we do this, how do we acquire the Holy Spirit? St. Innocent again speaks very clearly on this. He says first (*Indication*, p 34): “In order to even begin this task, we must first be united to the Church – the Holy Spirit is given to the Church and can only be acquired in this manner by those who are part of the Church. Those outside the Church can see glimpses of the riches within, but cannot themselves experience this wealth until they too enter in. The Holy Spirit works within their hearts, not to indwell them, but to draw them to the font of Living Water – that is the Church. For those outside the Church, the Holy Spirit creates in them a desire to unite themselves to God and so brings them to the doors of the Church. And having made the decision to enter into the Church, they are then able to acquire the Holy Spirit as their own.”

For those of us within the Church, St. Innocent teaches us that there are seven means by which we can acquire the Holy Spirit. These are: Purity of heart and chastity; Humility; Listening to the voice of God; Prayer; Daily self-denial; Reading and listening to the Holy Scripture; And the sacraments of the Church, especially Holy Communion.

The first of these, purity of heart and chastity, indicate that we must keep ourselves and our bodies pure and free from sin, which do not allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, from the time of our baptism. Remember as the Holy Apostle Paul tells us, that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and so must be kept pure and clean. Should you fall into some kind of sin or temptation, there is a remedy provided for you – repentance. This is to stop sinning, and with contrition of heart, repent that you have offended God and begin to live with great

vigilance to avoid a repetition of your sin. This is how one maintains his soul as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

Second we have the path of humility. Even though you may be honest and good and have fulfilled all the commandments, always regard yourself as an unprofitable servant and no more than God's instrument through whom He acts. Recognize that all that is good in you is simply God's gift and God's action, and the only actions of your own are your sins. This is the essence of humility – to be aware of yourself as an empty vessel which is filled, not with your own goodness, but with the grace of God – and it is this grace that is the only thing of value in you. Humility has also another aspect, and that is to accept all that God gives you with patience, and without murmuring to bear all that God gives in your life, both that which is “good” and that which is “bad”. Developing this mindset within yourself, that all things in our lives are a gift from God and that He has given them to us for our salvation, and bearing the cross that God gives us, is the quickest and most certain path to developing humility. Ask God, not so much to deliver you from adversities, but rather to give you the strength to bear them.

Third we attentively listen to voice of God. This is quite similar to what I have just said about humility. By the circumstances of your life and the inner promptings of your heart, God speaks to you and call you, warns you, guides and teaches you every day of your life. For example:

You have suffered a great loss and are sad – the death of a family member.

In this God seeks to turn you from dependence upon the world and its diversions and entertainments, to seek rather Himself in repentance gaining your comfort and consolation from Him alone.

Or: you have received some great blessing and are full of happiness.

In this God seeks to remind you that He is the source of all joy and all that is good.

In each event of our lives we should be listening for the voice of God – seeking to hear Him as He directs our minds and hearts constantly toward Himself.

Fourth we have prayer. This is the simplest and

most direct means of acquiring the Holy Spirit and it is available to all of us at all times – there is no time when we cannot pray and there is no one who cannot pray. Prayer should involve the whole being. St Theophan the Recluse, along with many of the great spiritual fathers, speaks of three kinds of prayer – that of the lips, that of the mind, and that of the heart. Prayer of the lips is the outward prayer – that spoken by our mouth and heard by our ears and expressed in our bows and crosses. Prayer of the mind is that prayer in which our understanding is involved. Prayer of the heart is prayer in which our desires and emotions are engaged. In order for a prayer to be true prayer, it must encompass all of these. We can all tell of our own experience when these three aspects of ourselves are shattered:

Saying one thing, thinking another and desiring still a third.

Words of prayer, mind wandering, and heart set upon the food that will follow.

And yet in order for prayer to truly be effective in acquiring the Holy Spirit, one must unite all of these aspects of ourselves into a single prayer. There is of course much more that can be said of prayer; however, that will be set aside for another time.

Fifth, we must have this daily self denial. One of the fathers has said; “If you want your prayer to fly up to God, then give it two wings, fasting and almsgiving” These are the most effective means of self denial. In fasting we cut off our own desires – particularly those of the belly which are strongest – and as a result the body is quieted and becomes more sensitive to spiritual things. Rather than ruling the soul with its passions, the body, through fasting becomes the servant of the soul. Almsgiving is the general term which encompasses not only giving to the poor, but all works of righteousness and mercy. In almsgiving, we cut off our own desires and place the desires of others in a place of importance. In almsgiving we do not our own will, but the will of God. If we engage in these two forms of self-denial daily, then we will open the door of our heart to the Holy Spirit.

Sixth we receive the Holy Spirit by reading and listening to the Holy Scripture. And this activity is not passive but active – receiving the revelation of God in each word and phrase, understanding it not

according to our own wisdom, but according to the tradition and teaching of the Church, which is God's wisdom. In this we must be careful that we do not attempt to superimpose our own ideas and our own desires on the Gospel, hearing only what we want to hear, but rather we must accept it in simplicity and innocence of heart – receiving from the Gospel the instruction of God for the renewing of our soul. If there is confusion or a lack of understanding, then it is best to turn to the Church for an explanation, rather than to attempt to resolve it by our own fallen reason. With this in mind we should daily read the Scripture and we should make arrangements to be able to hear it read as often as possible. (Recordings – home, car, office, headphones...)

Finally, we receive the Holy Spirit through the sacraments of the Church, especially through receiving the Most Holy Body and Most Precious Blood. But like all things, this is not a passive act, but rather something in which we participate with our whole selves. Whenever we are about to receive

any sacrament, we must prepare ourselves through repentance, prayer and fasting. As often as we can prepare we should approach the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ and receive them. At least once a year, but if possible more often than that – as frequently as you can.

These then are the ways of receiving the Holy Spirit:

Purity of heart and integrity of life, humility, attentive listening to the voice of God in our lives, prayer, self-denial, reading and listening to the word of God, and receiving the Holy Mysteries, particularly the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. This is the path of the saints and it is our path. In doing these things we become more able to incorporate the Holy Spirit in our lives – we make ourselves more porous to Him so that we might become more completely filled with Him and in so doing participate in the life of the Holy Trinity.

— Fr. David Moser
Pentecost, 1999

OUR VENERABLE FATHER ANDREW THE HERMIT WHOM THE CHURCH CELEBRATES MAY 15

Our righteous father Andrew the hermit and miracle-worker was in his prime at the time of the pious Emperor Michael the Despot and was a native of the town of Monodendron.

He chose the ascetic life at a mature age and became an imitator of the old saints. He abandoned all the amenities of the world, wealth and property, even his wife, and dwelt in the wilderness. There he lived alone as he endured many privations and wants, the cold and heat, hunger and thirst, in obedience to the Lord's voice which said: "Whosoever wishes to follow me let him deny himself and lift up his cross and follow me. And I shall give him rest in the kingdom of heaven." The Blessed one lived an austere life afterwards with many restraints and carried on as if he were bodiless. Later, he returned to his own country and lived on a mountain which was in the vicinity of his parents' home. At night he conducted vigils and stands for many years until he reached an advanced age and departed to the Lord.

His translation was revealed in the following manner. When God decided to take up his spirit, candles appeared, shining brightly round about descending from heaven down to the very spot where his holy relic lay, and then ascended toward heaven. This is how the Almighty God honors those that honor Him. When this sign was manifested the news did not only reach the surrounding communities and towns, but the Queen of cities* itself. The pious Queen Theodora visited the site accompanied by her court. They found St. Andrew's relic and they heard of the miracles that the Lord worked through this holy father and gave praises to the Almighty. The queen ordered that a Church be constructed in honor of St. Andrew.

Ever since then and to this very day his memory is celebrated with pomp and we honor the Almighty God and His servant the righteous father Andrew. By whose intercessions may our Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on us. Amen

NOTE:

*It appears that the Queen of cities was not Constantinople. And Theodora was not the mother of Emperor Michael who reinstated the holy icons, but the one who is celebrated at Arta and was probably the mother or wife or daughter of Michael, the Despot as the author of this life calls him. The mountain on which the saint strove is called Kalana today, and it is one half hour distant from the village, Halkiupolis. There is a great cave on that mountain and in the cave there is a church which was built and maintained to this very day. On the exterior of the church near the sanctuary lies the tomb of the holy relic, and it is surrounded by an impressive wall which was built by order of Queen Theodora.

During the seventeen hundred and ninety-fourth year of our Lord, a devout priest of the day, John Nicholas Gerodemou was moved by zeal for the saint, and decided to silver plate part of St. Andrew's relic, that is the two legs from the knees to the ankles. This was a custom of all Christians since early times. For this purpose he went to Carpenesion.

He arrived there, and visited the goldsmith father George. The two calculated that it would be to their best interest to separate the two relics and silver plate them independently. In their indecision

they consulted the Bishop of Agrapha and Letzas Dositheos, and he suggested that they separate the relics. However that night the saint appeared to him in a dream and prevented him from doing so saying: "As soon as you are roused from sleep give the relics to the goldsmith and he shall silver plate them as they are. Indeed, this devout priest John silver plated the relics as they were, *in situ*, and related the vision to all and the intervention of the saint.

During that same night Saint Andrew said to the aforementioned priest John: "After the silver plating is completed, and you return to your village, exhume my tomb and you shall find thirty two members of my relics. You shall distribute them to the neighboring monasteries and you must not keep any additional relics aside from the two you have." The pious priest John did as he was told. He invited certain of the other monks and they conducted the translation of the relics. However, they found only twenty-eight remnants present and not thirty-two. The other pieces were probably stolen by the neighboring Christians due to piety and zeal. He distributed them to the surrounding monasteries of which the principal ones were Boumon, Tatarnas, St. Arethas, St. Paraskeve, and Barytados. He gave one of the ribs of St. Andrew to the Bishop of Arta and Rogon Macarius.

Translated by Leo Papadopoulos from *The Great Synaxaristes*, by Matthew Lagges, Athens 1960 Vol. V pp. 428-430. All rights reserved Ellensburg, WA 2005

THE NARRATIVE OF METRIUS WHOM THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES ON JUNE 1

In Galatia of Paphlagonia there was a farmer named Metrius, who lived with all of life's comforts and amenities. He knew that his neighbor had sons which he hoped to make eunuchs and send them to Constantinople so that they could become servants of the Emperor. He was imbued with the same zeal as he and supplicated and prayed to God, saying: "Lord, if I Thy servant am worthy, bestow upon me a son who will be my support and comfort in my old age, and I shall honor Thy holy name." As he completed his prayer, it was time to go to the annual

fair at Paphlagonia. So he loaded his merchandise onto a cart and went to the fair. Some of the goods he sold, some he traded, and left the fair and repaired to a valley where there was water so that by a stream he might rest his oxen. Suddenly he looked down and on the turf noticed a treasure chest. He took up the chest, put it on his cart, and continued on his way. When he arrived at his house he hid it in a secure corner and never told anyone. Neither did he pry it open to see its contents, or whether it contained gold or not. Therefore, if one were to call

that farmer an angel or saint or one of God's servants, he would not be far from the truth.

The following year at the opening of the fair, Metrius loaded his wagon as always, with the chest in it — sealed, and went to the fair. He entered the festival grounds, and sold and traded all his produce as usual. Then he started to purchase those items that he needed for his house, and departed before everyone and went back to the valley where he rested and watched the travelers as they passed by. Unexpectedly, the man who had lost the money came to the spot where he had forgotten the chest, and, seeing the farmer, sighed from the bottom of his heart; and the latter said to him: "Who are you, my brother, and why do you grieve and sob?" But the man, due to his intense sorrow, could not speak, and it was with difficulty that Metrius persuaded him to talk to him. "What good would it do if I were to tell you the cause of my grief?" Metrius said: "Tell me. Maybe I can help you with a simple word." Then he sighed again and said to him: "I, my brother, became a skilled merchant, and in my possession I had a thousand pounds. I also borrowed additional money and bought a large amount of goods. I put the fifteen-hundred pounds in a strong box and sealed it with a silk ribbon. I left the fair and came to this spot where I lost the box. So instead of the great wealth that I possessed before, now I am totally poor. You, my brother, are impoverished and your dress is equally poor. How can you help me?"

The farmer then knew that he was the one who had lost the gold, so he took the chest from his cart and showed it to him, saying: "Is this the chest that you lost?" The sudden appearance of the box was a shock to the poor merchant, especially when it was given him by a poor man. So because of his great joy he fell on the earth and lay there speechless. Metrius took water from the stream and sprinkled it on his face and, taking him by the hand, raised him up, saying: "Tell me, oh brother; is this box yours?" The merchant was in tears by then and fell at his feet and said: "Yes, oh angel of God, it is mine and no one else's. I see that you did not open it but left it sealed as it was." The farmer replied: "Open it in

my presence and if the gold be all there, then I believe that it is yours." Then they sat down and opened the chest. They counted the money and found that it was fifteen-hundred pounds. The merchant urged the farmer to take five-hundred florins in return, but he could not convince him. After this, he begged him to accept even a few as a reward, but Metrius would not even take one.

Thereafter, they arose and gave thanks to God, bid one another farewell, and returned to their homes in joy and gladness. That night, the farmer reclined on his bed; and after he slumbered, a radiant angel appeared to him, who said: "Because you did so, God will grant you a child; and you shall do according to your desire. After he is of age he will go to Constantinople and shall become famous, and will be the cause of much good for your family." Our farmer was suddenly aroused by the dream and gave thanks to God. A short time later, his wife gave birth to a boy, and the angel of the Lord appeared to him again saying: "Your child will be named Constantine."

The boy was baptized and given that name, and he was nursed and raised and sent to Constantinople. The Empress took an interest in the boy and presented him to the Emperor Leo the Wise, son of Basil the Macedonian, who was so fond of him that he trained him and made him a patrician with the title of chamberlain. As a result of this his parents were the recipients of many benefits and compensations, and so was his entire family.*

*Every Christian of our day should imitate the blessed man Metrius so as to become a recipient of the same reward as he. Therefore, whenever one finds a lost item he should not keep it to himself, for it is considered theft, and especially when the owner of the object is known. One should announce it in public until the owner turns up, and should not seek reward for finding it. Thus should all Christians do as the nineteenth canon of Saint Gregory of Neocaesarea states: "Those who adhere to the commandment should do so without seeking an illicit reward or gain, or demanding anything from the owner thereof."